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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined Chicago teachers' attitudes about school-based management are presented in this paper. A questionnaire was administered to 60 teachers in a Chicago public elementary school that had been involved in a restructuring program for 2 years. A majority of the teachers expressed positive opinions of the school-based management elements in their program. Findings suggest that school-based management leads to school improvement in the following areas: instruction; curriculum; collaboration; teacher autonomy; and teacher collegiality. Problem areas involve parental involvement, school security, and paperwork. One table is included. (12 references) (LMI)

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TEACHERS' OPINIONS OF SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

Sandra Crosby

The greatest concern in the field of education today is reform and school improvement. President Bush has even jumped in the arena and has proposed a solution to the problems of our educational system in the form of a plan called Education 2000. There appears to be a decline in our educational system and educators as well as lawmakers are devising ways to combat the problems facing our schools. School-based management is being proposed and utilized as an effective means of resolving the problems plaguing our school systems. Since several school systems across the country have implemented this theory; what better way to assess its effectiveness than to query those individuals responsible for its implementation. With proper information, educators can make valid decisions to improve schools.

School-based management's roots trace back to the 1960's and the 1970's. During this era, it was referred to as decentralization and school-site budgeting. These practices were adopted in an effort to give political powers to the local communities and to off-set state authority. The focus of school-based management in the 1980's and 1990's is quite different. The interest in education today is school improvement

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and organizational changes.

School-based management is one of the current trends of educational reform. The foundation of school-based management is shared decision-making among principals, teachers, ancillary staff, parents, students, and community representatives.

The essence of school-based management is to create ownership for those responsible for carrying out decisions by involving them directly in the decision-making process; thereby making them stakeholders.

School-based management is an alternative to bureaucratic regulation. Research indicates that a top-down system does not work.

School-based management enhances the collabration of the Local School Council, the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee, and the school community. These constituencies are empowered to create conditions in schools that facilitate improvement and provide for continuous professional growth and innovation.

This process enables schools to engage in researching and implementing a number of site-initiated improvement activities.

With the implementation of school-based management, it is hoped that the participants create more effective schools and improve student outcomes.

Not all educators view school-based management as a vehicle to improve schools. Here are some interesting viewpoints to the other side of the coin: 1. Since principals are held accountable for everything that happens in their buildings, they should have the power to control people, resources, events, and plans. 2. Principals can only effect desired outcomes if they have the role power to do so.

3. If principals' power to supervise teachers diminishes, the quality of classroom instruction will decrease. 4. Principals will act less as instructional leaders and more as managers. 5. Parents will view principals as weak if principals must share in decision-making.

Limited research is available on teachers' and administrators' opinions of school-based management. With the increased number of schools jumping on the shared decision-making bandwagon; research is being performed to assess the effectiveness of school-based management. A summary of current research of school-based management's effectiveness is provided.

Acknowledging teacher involvement as a crucial component of school-based management, Ogletree (1990) examined teachers' opinions of Chicago School Reform. The subjects were 100 Chicago teachers in 10 schools. Data were collected by quering teachers' opinions of school reform, its effects on schools, suggestions for improvement, and open-ended comments. Findings indicate that unless school restructing efforts actively involve teachers, the quality of education, student retention, graduation rates, and teacher autonomy will not improve.

Collegiality and sharing result in school improvement. Goldman's and Dunlap's (1990) paper describes a study conducted by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the Camp Lejeune Dependents' schools during the 1989-90 school year. Four schools participated.

A case study, analysis, interviews, observation, a teacher and principal survey, and document analysis were used as tools of evaluation. Findings

indicate reduced teacher isolation, increased collaboration, and improved instruction. Additionally, increased participant learning, curriculum improvement, and energizing effects of change were noted.

Shared decision-making is the essence of school-based management. Wishnick and Wishnick (1991) conducted a study to examine and explain the behavioral intentions of teacher union leaders to initiate a site-based decision-making program with their principals. The subjects were 51 teacher union representatives in a large unified school district in Northern California. The representatives were full-time teachers. Eighty-two percent of the subjects were females. The subjects were asked questions to determine their attitude strength and their subjective norms to help explain their behavioral intention. Results of this study indicate that teacher union representatives' personal and social beliefs regarding the implementation of site-based decision-making programs may add to the predicition of whether teachers in general want to expand their decision-making responsibilities.

School-based management provides some interesting data in regards to the administrators' role and responsibilities. Heller (1989) conducted a national survey to find out administrators' opinions of school-based management. A questionnaire was mailed to a stratified random sample of 4,800 school executives. Every state with the exception of Hawaii was represented in the final sample. The response was 1,509 or 31 percent. Findings indicate that 91 percent of principals favor school-based management compared with only 80 percent of the superintendents.

Research further suggest that the faculty maybe hesitant to make decisions and be accountable and that teachers don't want the responsibility.

It appears that there are multiple and diverse obstacles which stand in the way of school-based management.

Teachers' attitudes toward school reform is certainly worthwhile examining. In light of the fact that teacher involvement is crucial to the successful implementation of school-based management. Butler, Williams, and Kpo (1990) conducted a study to explore the attitudes of teachers toward Illinois School Reform Act. A questionnaire elicited attitudes from 320 teachers employed at three ethnically diverse high schools selected to pilot the Model Schools Project during the 1988-1989 school year. One hundred and sixty-four teachers responded to the survey. The attitude scale yielded results in two constructs: endorsement of school reform and anxiety about specific policy changes. Results of the research also suggest that the most experience teachers were the most anxious and had the lowest endorsement for the reform bill. Those teachers participating in the school's pilot of a school-based management model had significantly greater endorsement and expressed lower anxiety than nonparticipants.

The aspect of shared decision-making in local school planning was surveyed in a study conducted by Elenbogen and Hiestand (1987). In this study, the practices and perceptions of shared decision-making and the effects on student achievement and attendance were examined. A questionnaire was administered to a sample of 242 elementary and high school teachers, principals, and assistant principals in Chicago, Illinois. The response rate was approximately 75 percent. Seventy-two percent of those respondents were teachers. The research findings indicate that schools that ranked midrange on a shared decision-making

index made greater gains in student mathematics, reading, and attendance than did higher or lower ranking schools.

Despite the importance placed on teacher involvement, research indicates that some teachers feel alienated from their schools. Schwartz, (1990) conducted a study to examine high school teachers' attitudes in two high schools to different social contexts with cultural attributes that affect teacher participation in school wide decision-making. Data were collected from surveys of 13 to 15 randomly selected teachers, and from interviews with administrators and counselors. Findings indicate that teachers who view their social contexts as unfavorable lack the psychological conditions necessary for effective participation in decision-making. Findings also suggest that teachers who feel alienated from their schools are unlikely to participate in collaboration.

School empowerment is a challenge. Glickman's study (1990) highlights some schools which have accepted the challenge and initiated changes to restructure. These schools are part of the first project of the University of Georgia's Program for School Improvement. These schools were assisted by the University of Georgia's Program for School Improvement with school-based management implementation. Methods of evaluation and consultation were provided to help schools assess their progress toward their goals. The findings were positive. The schools showed significant and positive effects on students and faculty members. This study suggests that school-based management could be the key to producing a nation of educated citizens.

The Institute For Educational Research conducted a survey to examine superintendents' opinions and experiences with school-based management. (1989) A questionnaire was used to provide information on school

based management in these eight areas: purposes, characteristics, community attitudes,staff readiness, evaluation criteria, current areas of local and or teacher decision-making, implementation plans, and effective schools research.

Findings indicate that more than 50% of responding superintendents agree that school-based management is essential to school reform and 80% believe that school-based management promotes instructional improvement, cultivates educational innovation, and heightens teaching professionalism.

Summary

It is suggested from the research that most of the literature relative to school-based management deals with a number of studies conducted by researchers which produce enough hard data to conclude that school-based management is rapidly being adopted as an effective vehicle to restructure and improve schools. However; there is limited data available on teachers' and administrators' opinions of school-based management. It is evident that further research is necessary to accurately assess opinions of teachers and administrators.

The purpose of this study is to determine Chicago Teachers' opinion of school-based management. A school-based management program had been implemented at the school being studied under school reform two years ago.

Procedures

The population/sample included sixty elementary Chicago public school teachers. A thirty-five item, self-devised questionnaire, based on the most relevant school-based management issues was administered to the sample. The instrument was pilot test on ten teachers not included in the sample. The chi square test was employed to determine the statistical significance (.05) of the results.

Results

The findings indicate that the sample had a significant (.05) positive opinion of a majority of the elements of school-based management at their school. They also suggest the implementation of school-based management lends to school improvement. Improvement was noted in the following areas: instructional strategies, instruction, curriculum, collaboration, increased teacher autonomy, and reduction in teacher isolation.

The findings of this study suggest that teachers are receptive to school-based management and that the school is achieving its goals. Results of the study indicate improved curriculum and instructional strategies. Several workshops and staff development activities are provided for professional development and to keep the staff abreast of current teaching strategies and techniques.

This study also indicates increased collaboration. The review of literature suggest that the essence of school-based management is shared decision making. Teachers, parents, students, administrators, staff, and community representatives at this local site all share in the decision making process.

Problem areas are parental involvement, security in the school, student control, amount of paperwork for teachers. The parental component of school-based management must be addressed to improve its effectiveness. The school must also provide a safe and warm climate for its stakeholders. Student control is a problem at this site. The school must implement a plan to address this concern. Findings suggest that the amount of paperwork for teachers has not decreased. Teachers feel that with increased responsibilities and duties associated with school-based management, the amount of paperwork for them should be reduced.

These problems must be addresssed to facilitate improvement and create a more effective school.

The results of this study lends acceptance of the theory expressed in the review of literature, that school-based management is an effective vehicle for school improvement. Additional research in this area is vital for the future prediction of school-based management implementation and its effectiveness.

TABLE I

RESPONSES TO SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

A. AGREE B. UNDECIDED C. DISAGREE

N=50

		(Percent)	
School-Based Management Has:	A	B	C
1. Improved the educational climate?	80*	4	16
2. Increased teacher autonomy?	98*	0	2
3. Increased shared decision making-Admin-teachers?	94*	6	0
4. Improved rapport with administration?	96*	0	4
5. Principal confides with faculty on problems?	56	24	0
6. Improved student control?	4	18	78*
7. Enhanced faculty morale?	84*	8	8
8. Enhanced faculty/staff congeniality?	90*	10	0
9. Improved use of teacher aides?	72*	6	22
10. Reduced adminiatrative paperwork for teachers?	10	0	90*
11. Increased the number of programs for students?	98*	2	0
12. Improved security in the school?	26	0	74*
13. Improved student attendance?	88*	0	12
14. Increased job satisfaction?	88*	10	2
15. Increased instructional materials and supplies?	98*	0	2
16. Improved classroom learning?	76*	4	20
17. Administration supports teachers?	90*	0	10
18. Improved working conditions?	96*	0	4
19. Improved parental support for teachers?	10	20	70*
Teachers Participate in:			
20. Selection of textbooks?	98*	0	2
21. Determining instructional methods?	94*	0	6
22. Budget preparation?	30	0	70*
23. Determining student discipline policies?	94*	6	0
24. Curriculum decisions?	76*	10	14
25. Developing agenda for inservice meetings?	86*	4	10

*significant .05 level

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